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Are Soviets Exploiting U.S. Technology?

White House Tells Agencies To Investigate Data Leaks

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Amid widespread apprehension that the Soviet Union is exploiting American technological advances to increase its military strength, the Carter administration has launched an extensive study of technology transfers to Communist countries.

Between 15 and 20 government agencies are working on a presidential review memorandum ordered by the National Security Council. It will examine a wide range of issues involved in selling scientifically and technically advanced industrial goods and production know-how to potential enemies.

Papers presenting different views on this broad subject are scheduled to be completed in November, although some officials are skeptical of meeting the deadline. After interagency meetings to try to reconcile conflicting interests, President Carter is expected to issue a decision memorandum setting a comprehensive new policy.

An NSC official said yesterday that "very complex theoretical and mechanical problems are involved," making the study a lengthy and complicated one. A Pentagon official commented that "there is a wide range of opinions" which will need to be considered.

SECRETARY OF Defense Harold Brown recently issued an interim policy decision intended to tighten controls on the transfer of advanced technologies that are believed to have military potential. The decision also sought to liberalize trade in some finished products which have been restricted under a quarter-century-old system of controlling trade with Communist countries.

Brown's decision developed out of the first major review of East-West trade in relation to military policy to be conducted in many years. It had begun in the Pentagon during a previous administration.

Carter became president at a time when national concern was growing over the constant modernization and expansion of Soviet armed forces. The role of imported Western technology in that modernization are becoming increasingly important.

According to one administration official, Carter's new NSC staff felt there was a need for an even more comprehensive study of the problem than the one which the Pentagon had made. But the NSC had other more pressing matters on which to set national policy first. So the technology transfer study was finally ordered only during the summer.

AS PART OF HIS concern over Soviet military strength, Sen. Henry M. Jackson, D-Wash., had been looking into the subject. Jackson made public today a letter he had written to Carter on July 25 calling for the kind of review that the NSC was planning.

"The effect of our past and current policies," Jackson wrote, "has been to enable the Soviets and their allies to acquire technology that bears importantly on the military balance between East and West. . . . Our current condition can best be described as acute hemorrhaging."

Jackson said the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations which he chairs had found that the government was unable to accurately assess technology transfers.

"Its inability to relate the known flow of data, hardware, technological processes, knowhow and technical exchange to the Soviet's military technology base creates an appalling vacuum in which thousands of decisions must be made on sales, licensing, exchange programs and the like," Jackson wrote.

The Commerce Department is responsible for sales to the Soviet bloc. It has been caught in the middle between industry's desire to sell, the Pentagon's wariness of letting the Soviets acquire potentially useful technology, and the State Depart-

ment's desire to get along with other countries.

ANY POLICY has to be coordinated with foreign governments because American-originated technology might pass through them to the Communists in normal trade or in accidental leakage.

At present, Jackson said, "There is an inordinately wide diffusion of responsibility throughout the government (for making decisions on what can be sold to Communist countries), with the result that, when on occasion the right hand knows what the left hand is doing, they are likely to be found working at cross purposes."